



NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



Contact: Shelley Du Puy
Office: 409-621-5151 ext 106
Cell: 409-370-9525

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Oct. 22, 2010

NOAA Releases Draft Management Plan for Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary

NOAA today released a comprehensive draft management plan and environmental assessment for [Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary](#) for public review and comment. Based on several years of scientific study and public input, the plan includes recommendations for expanding sanctuary boundaries to include additional reefs and banks in the northwestern region of the Gulf of Mexico and examining the need for a specific study to assess impacts of hook-and-line fishing and scuba diving.

"The draft management plan is the result of a collaborative effort that involved many hours of hard work from sanctuary staff and from the sanctuary's advisory council," said Daniel J. Basta, director of [NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries](#). "We welcome further public review and comment as we go forward with the important job of managing this special undersea place for future generations to enjoy."

The new draft plan is a major revision to the sanctuary's original management plan published in 1991. It identifies actions to be undertaken by sanctuary staff within the next five to 10 years to protect and conserve marine resources in the northwestern Gulf of Mexico. It includes action plans to address six priority topics: sanctuary expansion, education and outreach, research and monitoring, resource protection, visitor use, and operations and administration.

"This plan is centered on the need to manage marine resources for biodiversity conservation," said George Schmahl, sanctuary superintendent. "This is an evolving approach that stresses conservation of sanctuary resources important to the region's biological communities and integrates compatible human uses."

Periodic management plan review is required by Congress for each of the 13 national marine sanctuaries to ensure that they continue to conserve, protect, and enhance their nationally significant living and cultural resources while allowing compatible commercial and recreational activities.

All comments must be received by January 20, 2010. Written comments should be sent by e-mail to fgbmanagementplan@noaa.gov, by fax to 409-621-1316, or by mail to:

George Schmahl, Sanctuary Superintendent,
Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary,
4700 Avenue U, Bldg 216, Galveston, Texas, 77551

A public meeting will be held on Dec. 9, 2010, from 4 to 8 p.m. at the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary headquarters, located at 4700 Avenue U, Building 216, Galveston, Texas.

Copies of the draft management plan and environmental assessment are available at Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary's headquarters offices in Galveston. Copies may be requested by calling 409-621-5151, ext. 103, or via e-mail: fgbmanagementplan@noaa.gov. The plan may also be downloaded from the sanctuary's website: <http://flowergarden.noaa.gov>.

Located 70 to 115 miles off the coast of Texas and Louisiana, Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary is one of 14 marine protected areas — including 13 sanctuaries and one marine national monument managed by NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. Designated in 1992, the sanctuary is home to some of the healthiest coral reefs in the South Atlantic and Caribbean region. The sanctuary currently includes three separate banks encompassing 56 square miles that are part of a larger system of reefs and banks along the continental shelf in the northwestern Gulf of Mexico.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Visit us [online](#) or at [Facebook](#).

##

On the Web:

Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary: <http://flowergarden.noaa.gov>

NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>